Not All Carbs are Created Equal

Carbohydrates are an essential part of a healthy diet and provide fuel to the body. However, not all carbohydrates are created equal. Carbohydrate-containing foods are comprised of starch, sugars and dietary fiber. A better understanding of the role carbohydrates play in the body, the amount required, and the different types and quality may help guide your food choices, and ultimately build a healthy eating pattern.

Quality Counts

Carbohydrates are the body's primary source of energy, fueling most organs and tissues in the body, including our brain and muscles.[1] They are found mostly in grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy foods. No matter the source, starches and sugars are broken down into glucose in the body to provide energy. The Food and Nutrition Board of the Institutes of Medicine recommend that carbohydrates make up the largest portion of our daily calories (45-65 percent).[2] Based on a 2000-calorie diet, this translates to approximately 225-325g of carbohydrates per day.

It is important to remember that not all carbohydrates are created equal. Carbohydrate-containing foods can differ in the amounts and types of nutrients they provide, including whole grains, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Therefore, when choosing foods, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend making at least half your grains whole grain choices, and to limit refined grains and sugars.[3] Carbohydrates can also differ in the rate at which they release glucose in our bodies, resulting in different physiological implications.[4] For example, slowly digestible starch (a slow-release carb) takes longer for our body to break down, resulting in a steady release of energy over time. Other carbohydrates can break down quickly, resulting in a rapid release of energy. It is therefore important to consider the quality of carbohydrates — their nutrient content and the rate at which they release energy — when choosing foods to meet the recommended intake.

You can find information about the carbohydrate content of packaged foods on the label. The Nutrition Facts panel shows total carbohydrates per serving, including dietary fiber, total sugars and added sugars. Certain foods also display grams of whole grains per serving or slow-release carbs on pack.

Slow-Release Carbs for Steady Energy

Slowly digestible starch (a slow-release carb) is naturally found in many grains, legumes, roots, and tubers in their uncooked form. But when slow-release carbs are exposed to uncontrolled heat, pressure, and moisture, as can occur during cooking, they can be converted to fast-release carbs. Slow-release carbs can be preserved by controlling these variables. When looking for foods with slow-release carbs, look for those with "slowly digestible starch" or "slow-release carbs" on the label.

Slow-release carbs are quality carbs that take longer for the body to break down, resulting in a steady release of energy.

For example, backed by a decade of research, Crunchy belVita Breakfast Biscuits are formulated to maintain a naturally high level of slow-release carbs, through carefully selected grains and a unique baking process, providing 4 hours of steady energy. Plus, they contain 18-20g of whole grains (per 50g serving), 2-4g fiber per serving, and are a good source of B-vitamins and iron.* Together these benefits make belVita a quality carbohydrate choice.

Try pairing Crunchy belVita Breakfast Biscuits with a serving of low-fat yogurt and fresh fruit for a balanced breakfast that will provide steady morning energy.

For more information on the science of slow-release carbs, visit **www.slowreleasecarbs.com.**

* Contains 220-230 calories, 0.5-1.5g saturated fat, 125-220mg sodium, 10-12g total sugars per serving.

1. U.S. National Library of Medicine, NIH. Carbohydrates. http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/carbohydrates.html
2. IOM: DRIs. Carbohydrate. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 2002.
3. USDA and HHS. DGAs, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at DietaryGuidelines.gov.
4. Englyst K, et al. Br J Nutr. 2003;89:329–40. doi: 10.1079/BJN2002786.